

It is interesting to inquire why medical science is under so little obligation to constituted authority. Why is it that when the state gives endowments for the advancement of learning in languages, mathematics, metaphysics, and the natural and physical sciences, it neglects, as a rule, to give assistance to medical research or medical education? Several reasons are to be urged in answer to this question, and for one of these we must examine the condition of medicine during the first half of this century, when it could not press any such claims to be considered a science as it now presents. While it consisted of much that was valuable, the greater part of it was pure empiricism. This was not all. There arose in the medical world a discussion on questions of a purely dogmatic character that should never have been introduced into medicine at all. Whether like cures like, or whether a disease is cured by a drug which produces the very opposite symptoms, were the questions of the day. There were others on which the very opposite answers were given. Is the therapeutical action of a drug increased the more if it is diluted or shaken, or the more finely it is divided? This discussion first arose in Germany, which gave, at the same time, origin to some other fantastic and absurd creeds in medicine, like Rademacherism, Isopathy, Ideal Pathology, etc., and it spread to England, France, and to this continent. These questions were even taken up by the lay world, and discussed, in some instances, with all the partisanship that characterizes party politics. Then some strove to adopt a position between the two camps, and this added to the confusion. What wonder is it that the public should, in the end, conclude that there was nothing scientific in medicine; that it was merely a matter of taste in more ways than one as to which school of medical practice you gave your adhesion when you desired medical treatment? Twenty-three centuries ago Hippocrates described a somewhat similar condition of medical practice which obtained in his time. After speaking of some physicians who constantly administer strained decoctions of barley, while others strain the juice through a cloth in order to prevent harm to the patient resulting from swallowing a particle of it; while others, again, give neither the juice nor the thick decoction until after the seventh day, or after the crisis, he says: "Physicians are not in the habit of mooted such questions; nor, perhaps, if mooted, would a solution of them be found; although the whole art is thereby exposed to much censure from the vulgar, who fancy that there really is no such science as medicine, since in acute diseases practitioners differ so much amongst themselves that those things which one administers as thinking it the best that can be given another holds to be bad; and in this respect they might say that the art of medicine resembles augury, since augurs hold that the same bird, if seen on the left hand, is good; but, if on the right, bad" ("On Regimen in Acute Diseases"). In the days of